

THE NATIONAL ERA.

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THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

A STORY OF THE ISLAND ESTATE.

BY MRS. EMMA D. E. SOUTHWORTH.

BOOK SECOND.

IX.—CONTINUED.

A momentary shade of vexation passed, as a light cloud, over the visage of Louise, and vanished. Louise was too happy to be annoyed by trifles. The family met at dinner. Louise explained, as far as the note did, the absence of Louis, and General Stuart-Gordon surmised that this business was in connection with the execution at Major Somerville's, and then he proceeded to give the account of it that he had heard in the course of the day.

Early the next morning, Mrs. Stuart-Gordon summoned her housekeeper, and gave her orders for the dinner. Little Louise was almost as happy as it was possible to be; and General Stuart-Gordon walked about leisurely and smilingly—

"At the faul of joy and hope
Seemed washing his hands with invisible soap,
In unpredictable water."

Nothing was wanting to complete his happiness but this family reconciliation, and now it was about to come off. When three o'clock struck, he mounted his horse, and, attended by Apollo on a second, rode down to the bridge, to wait for and welcome Mrs. Armstrong there. He waited on the bridge, amusing himself by looking at the reflection of the green banks and graceful trees in the clear water, or in looking towards Mont Crystal for the appearance of the carriage. At last it came in sight, and wound slowly down the hill. General Stuart-Gordon rode forward, and, while Apollo held open the wide gate to admit the carriage when it had crossed the bridge, the General advanced to the carriage door, and, giving to his stirrup, said, earnestly—

"Mrs. Armstrong, I most happy to see you! Permit me to attend you to the house, where the ladies await your coming with much impatience."

"I thank you, sir, and welcome you back to our neighborhood!"

Not one allusion, even by apology, was made to the past. The only difference was an elaborate reference of manner on the part of General Stuart-Gordon, and a stately graciousness on the side of the lady. Sending his servant on to the house to announce madam's arrival on the Isle of Rays, the gently Courfeyrolle himself rode at the lady's carriage side, opening the gates, pulling aside the bougs that crossed the road, &c. When the carriage drew up before the mansion, and Mrs. Armstrong prepared to alight, the General drew himself from his horse, opened the carriage door, put down the steps, and, after assisting the lady to descend, drew her arm within his own, and led her up the stairs to the piazza, from whence Britannia and Louise advanced to receive her. Then, to show her the highest possible respect, instead of ringing for a servant, Britannia conducted Mrs. Armstrong to a dressing-room herself, performed the part of *femme de chambre*, by assisting the lady to lay off her bonnet, shawls, tippets, &c. Louise was there also, with salvo, cologne, and a glass of wine, in case her mother were fatigued.

The whole family strove, by showing Mrs. Armstrong the highest honor, to testify their appreciation of her visit. Britannia, entirely disarmed by Mrs. Armstrong's seeming kindness, and reproaching herself for the pride and vanity of her display on the day before, put off all state, sunk for the time the "Mrs. General Stuart-Gordon," became "Brighty," and gave her personal attendance to Mrs. Armstrong with a deference she had never shown in her governessing days. As for General Stuart-Gordon, he was so enchanted with Brighty's goodness as to fall freshly in love with her that day, and kissed her every time he got a chance.

If Mrs. Armstrong's *seeming* kindness had worked such miracles of reform, and created such happiness, what cannot real kindness do? Try its effect, reader, upon your worst enemy.

But Louis had not come home. *Where was Louis?* It was four o'clock, and the family were all in the drawing-room, and dinner was about to be served without Louis. Louise was not an exacting little wife. Her affection for Louis was too moderate and too disinterested for that; but she was getting a little impatient for his arrival—would have felt a little lost and lonesome but for the presence of her mother. They dined without him.

"My dearest Louise," he said, coming forward and embracing her, "how happy I am to meet you again after a day's absence!"

"So am I glad to see you, Louis—and oh! Louis, mother has come!"

"I saw her carriage. I shall be very happy to see her!"

"Now, dearest Louis—or rather, I mean, Louis, you naughty trout, you!—what kept you away so long?"

"Ah, Louise! a sad, sad business. Perhaps you heard of the execution at Major Somerville's?"

"Yes! yes!—well?"

"Well, it appears that Susan wrote to my father for assistance, and we never got the letter?"

"Oh! what a pity!"

"And, of course, knowing nothing about the execution, did nothing to arrest its ill effects, and, in one word, Louise, when I called on Miss Somerville this morning, I found her alone, plunged in grief at the expected sale of her foster-parents, George and Harriet, who were then supposed to be in the slave pen at Peckville. The sale was to have come off to-day. I hurried to Peckville at once, and arrived to late. A slave trader from Alexandria had already purchased them, and had set out for the town that very morning. So, my own Louise, I went back to Miss Somerville with this news. She was so much distressed, and I sympathized with her so keenly, that I have determined to stay to reach Alexandria to-morrow morning, to see off to the poor couple before they are shipped to the South."

"And so you will leave me again so soon, Louise?"

"Would you have me hesitate a moment, Louise?"

"Oh, no! Poor Susan! But how long will you be gone, Louise?"

"A week, perhaps, my dear?"

"Oh, dear! me a week! It is so lonesome here without you, Louise!"

During this little talk, Louis Stuart-Gordon had been changing his dress. His toilette being now complete, they went down stairs into the drawing-room. Louis Stuart-Gordon advanced to Mrs. Armstrong and welcomed her with an easy grace, raising her hand respectfully to his lips with an affectionate gallantry, as if nothing had happened. Then turning, he explained to his father the nature of the business that had detained him from home, at the same time announcing his intention of leaving for Alexandria the next morning.

"In that case, my dear son-in-law," said Mrs. Armstrong, "I shall invite your wife to pass the days of your absence at Mont Crystal. Do you consent to this, Louise?"

"With great pleasure, my dear madam, if Louise will be pleased, as of course she will, to avail herself of your kind invitation."

"What do you say, my daughter?"

"Oh, I shall be too happy!"

Miss Armstrong remained all night at the Isle of Rays. After breakfast, the next morning, Louise departed for Alexandria, and Louise returned to Mont Crystal with her mother, who there to spend the week of her husband's absence.

A CHAMBER SCENE.

A light, commodious chamber
Looking out to the hills where the sun shineth
Of the great sun may enter—*Mary Howitt.*

The second day from the arrival of Louise at Mont Crystal saw the carriage of Mrs. Armstrong drawn up before the Island mansion.

General Stuart-Gordon advanced from the house and came down the steps to assist the lady to alight.

"I am overjoyed to see you again so soon, my dear madam, and my little daughter-in-law whom we have missed so much! She is within there, of course. Mrs. Stuart-Gordon will be delighted to see her."

"My daughter has not accompanied me, she came only upon a matter of business, to which I gave your attention for a few moments."

"Certainly, madam," said the General, offering his arm to the lady, with certain vague misgivings.

"Certainly, madam. Apollo led the way into the drawing-room, and then let your mistress know that Mrs. Armstrong is here."

"Sir, excuse me! I shall not present myself to your lady this morning!"

"Can we not persuade you to spend the day with us, madam?" said the General, in his bland

"General," "Well, madam, how can I serve you?" asked General Stuart-Gordon, after wailing the question that Mrs. Armstrong is here."

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